

Washington, DC -- U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan announced today that he will begin highlighting weekly examples of why Washington is broken, saying Congress is failing to represent the people in an honest, open and responsible manner.

"Whether it's ugly partisanship, conducting the people's business in secrecy, or creating massive debt for future generations, Congress is not living up to its obligation to serve the people," Buchanan said. "As a businessman, not a career politician, I am appalled at some of the actions Congress has taken in recent years under both Democratic and Republican control."

"We need to change Washington because it's not working for the people," Buchanan said. "I hope that by publicly highlighting a different example each week of Congressional abuse or excess, the American people will contact their representatives and demand the change and reform they deserve."

As his first example, Buchanan cites a Washington Post article describing a partisan brawl extreme even by Washington's standards. The incident resulted in one party locking the other party out of a committee room "with each side accusing the other of petty and childish behavior."

Here is the full story as reported by the Washington Post:

Partisan anger in House brings lockout of committee Republicans

The House of Representatives, ever the rowdier and more populist of the two chambers of Congress, has been the scene of incessant partisan warfare in 2009, as each party appears to be in a near-constant state of outrage over the behavior of the other.

The picture got uglier this week when Democrats on a House committee changed the locks on a hearing room door in retaliation for an embarrassing video posted online by panel Republicans. What started as a dispute over an oversight probe blossomed into a mini-melodrama, with each side accusing the other of petty and childish behavior.

This latest blow to interparty relations started last week in the Rayburn House Office Building.

Last Thursday, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee was set to hold a routine business meeting. Before the session, its ranking Republican, [Rep. Darrell Issa](#) (Calif.), made clear that he planned to call for the panel to subpoena Bank of America for documents related to Countrywide Financial Corp.'s infamous "Friends of Angelo" VIP mortgage program.

[Sens. Kent Conrad](#) (D-N.D.) and [Christopher J. Dodd](#) (D-Conn.) have gotten negative publicity for having received mortgages through the program, which was named after former Countrywide chief executive Angelo Mozilo. Oversight and Government Reform [Chairman Edolphus Towns](#) (D-N.Y.) has also acknowledged receiving a Countrywide mortgage, though he says he got no

special favors or VIP privileges.

When Thursday's committee meeting began, however, the Democrats were absent, and Republican members said they waited for more than half an hour before being told the session had been canceled because of scheduling conflicts. Democrats, meanwhile, were meeting in a private room behind the hearing room.

A Republican aide videotaped Democratic lawmakers leaving that gathering through a back door. The GOP interspersed that tape with footage of empty chairs from the main hearing room, and posted the video on the committee's minority Web site (and YouTube), set to the tune, "Hit the Road, Jack."

The majority was not pleased.

On Monday, panel Democrats had the lock changed on the door leading from the GOP's office space into the main hearing room. They did so, Towns' office said, because Republicans "don't know how to behave."

"I think it was a breach of decorum," Issa said of the lockout.

Towns lamented that "we used to be able to set aside campaign tactics and work together to get the people's business done when we were in our committees. Unfortunately, we've gotten away from respect for the process and the responsibilities we have as elected officials."

To critics, the scuffle is the latest symptom of the chamber's poisonous atmosphere. "It's been the worst since I started my career on Capitol Hill in 1959," said David Abshire, a former House aide and expert on civility who heads the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress.

Squabbling over committee rooms is not new on Capitol Hill. In 2003, the House Ways and Means Committee erupted into warfare after the panel's chairman, Rep. Bill Thomas (R-Calif.), summoned the Capitol Police to evict Democrats from a committee room in which they were huddling during a contentious markup of a pension reform bill. (Amid the bickering, one Democratic lawmaker repeatedly called a Republican a "fruitcake.") Thomas ended up delivering a tearful apology on the House floor.

But these days even apologies seem scarce. Democrats wanted -- but did not receive -- an apology in September from [Rep. Joe Wilson](#) (R-S.C.), who yelled "You lie!" at President Obama during an address to a joint session of Congress. A few weeks later, Rep. Alan Grayson (D-Fla.) declined to apologize for saying of the GOP's health-care plans: "Republicans want you to die quickly."

The House GOP's campaign arm did show some remorse last week, apologizing for sending out on its Twitter feed a link to a parody video that depicted Adolf Hitler complimenting Democrats' health-care proposals and [Speaker Nancy Pelosi](#) (D-Calif.).

Former representative Sherwood Boehlert (R-N.Y.), a well-liked moderate who retired from the

House in 2006, said Wednesday that he left the chamber because he had "never seen partisanship at a higher level" and "I have never seen tolerance for another point of view at a lower level."

The oversight committee has been especially prone to partisan bickering. In the 1990s, [Chairman Dan Burton](#) (R-Ind.) led repeated inquiries into the various scandals of the Clinton administration, once famously firing a bullet into a pumpkin in his own back yard during an inquiry into the death of White House aide Vincent Foster.

[Rep. Henry A. Waxman](#) (Calif.), long the top Democrat on the committee, chided Burton for issuing hundreds of subpoenas and accused him of using the panel for political purposes. But then Waxman assumed the chairmanship in 2007 and proceeded to torment the Bush administration with multiple probes.

As for the latest dispute, tempers have cooled. Issa and Towns met Wednesday to chart a way forward in the Countrywide investigation, and by Thursday, committee Republicans had taken down the offending video.

The hearing room door remained locked.